

Nachrufe für Annemarie Schimmel

(Harvard University)

Freitag, den 23. Mai 2003, um 2:30 nachmittags, wurde in der Memorial Church der Harvard-Universität ein "Service in Thanksgiving for the Life of Annemarie Schimmel" gehalten - einem alten Brauche folgend, der es den nahen Freunden und Kollegen in der Harvard-Gemeinde erlaubte, die Gestalt - oder die mehreren Gestalten - der Verstorbenen mit Wärme und Andacht heraufzubeschwören und alle Anwesenden daran teilhaben zu lassen. Eingebettet in einen Gottesdienst und von musikalischen Darbietungen umrahmt, geben die „remembrances“ ein Gefühl der Gemeinsamkeit in Trauer über den Verlust der Verstorbenen, aber auch in Freude über das Geschenk ihrer Existenz. Es war eine eminent persönlicher Tribut, von Liebe und Achtung getragen, und keinesfalls nur auf Trauermienen beschränkt. Die im folgenden abgedruckten vier Kurzreden (von insgesamt acht) bezeugen dies zur Genüge. Mehr als fünf Minuten waren übrigens nicht gestattet.

Beim Betreten der Kirche wurde man statt eines Orgelpräludiums von den klagenden Tönen einer einzelnen Nay empfangen. Die verhältnismäßig große Kirche füllte sich allmählich bis zur vollen Kapazität. Eingeleitet wurde der Service von einer Koranrezitation,

vorgetragen von Nargis Virani, Annemarie Schimmel's letzter Schülerin (jetzt Assistant Professor of Arabic, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri), gefolgt von einer Ansprache der zuständigen geistlichen Person, the Reverend Dorothy A. Austin (Sedgwick Associate Minister and Chaplain to Harvard University). Nach einem Kirchenlied folgten die acht „remembrances“, unterbrochen von musikalischen Darbietungen (Schubert, „Der Tod und das Mädchen“, Mozart, „Ave Verum“, und Samuel Barber, „Adagio for Strings“). Das Streichquartett und der Sopran für das Mozart-Stück waren samt und sonders Harvard-Undergraduates, aber von Weltklasse-Niveau. Nach Gebet und Segen begab man sich unter den Orgelklängen einer Chaconne von Buxtehude nach draußen und zu einem Empfang ins Humanities Center.

Wolfhart Heinrichs

Eulogy for Annemarie Schimmel

Richard N. Frye

I first came into contact with Annemarie after the war through a mutually admired German Orientalist Hans Heinrich Schaeder. He asked me to send a Care package to Annemarie in Marburg, and with it I wrote to her in German and she replied in English. As you know she was a prodigious writer and included poetry in her letters; she translated poems from Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Urdu and sometimes sent such translations in her letters to me. I met her for the first time in Marburg in 1960 but kept corresponding with her afterwards. When she was invited to Harvard Mr. Cherry, the lawyer holding the purse strings of the Minute Rice bequest, was angry that I had invited a German to translate Ghalib and Mir into English, but I assured him she would oversee translations from many languages to fulfill the conditions of the bequest to translate the poems of Ghalib and Mir Taqi Mir into English in the style of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. After meeting her, however, he was charmed by her as were many others.

She took a class in Pashto with me and before the course was finished she had translated and composed *landeys* in that language. Annemarie loved and lived poetry, so I close with one from Ludwig Uhland:

"Du kamst, du gingst mit leiser Spur,

Ein fluecht'ger Gast im Erdenland;

Woher? Wohin? wir wissen nur: Aus Gottes Hand in Gottes Hand."

Leb' wohl Annemarie

Annemarie Schimmel, In Memoriam

May 23 2003, Memorial Church, Harvard U.

William Graham

This is a moment that had to come for all of us gathered here, but one that none of us probably really expected would ever happen. The very idea that Annemarie is not out there somewhere on the planet writing another four books right now is hard to get through the head of any of us who knew her well and long.

Our remembrances today will surely signal how religiously eclectic Annemarie was in the end. She would like being remembered here in Memorial Church, I think, with Islamic flute, Schubert and Mozart, the Qur'an and Rumi. And she would probably approve my invoking here the words of the Mughal spiritual figure, Pir-i Roshan: "God speaks in every language, be it Arabic, Persian, Hindi, or Afghani; He speaks in the language that the human heart can understand." That is about as close as I can get to what I imagine her own mystical credo to have been. I first met Annemarie on her initial sojourn in Cambridge in the spring of 1967, when I was a green young graduate student studying Sanskrit but interested in Islam and writing a paper on Muhammad Iqbal. I thought it might be helpful to hear the author of *Gabriel's Wing* talk on Iqbal over in the Cronkite Center one early and wintry spring evening. I don't know how many times in the ensuing years I watched her close her eyes and launch into disquisitions on a thousand different Islamic topics, but I knew that first time that I had met someone who could truly qualify as "unique" in the fullest sense of the term. Who else could so offhandedly and naturally say of her childhood, "Ich war ein Wunderkind", without anyone thinking it odd or inappropriate? I would later go on to get to know her in a dozen different ways that are signalled by the memories that come back to me as I try to see her in my mind's eye: reading sufi texts with her; driving her and her

remarkable mother up the coast for North Shore fish dinners now and again during the latter's visits; meeting her for lunch at the Iruña or the original Legal Seafoods in Somerville; listening to her many and unequivocal opinions at countless gatherings of friends here in Cambridge or abroad; sweating over the correction of the remarkable "Germanglish" in which she drafted her innumerable would-be-English writings; eating of the "Harvard cow" she so disparaged at the Faculty Club; visiting her in Bonn on many occasions; and receiving her many cat pictures and inimitable Christmas chronicles in the mail.

How does one invoke such memories in public? With difficulty, but the few I have mentioned will, I expect, have touched off others for each person here. My friends and hers who follow me at the lectern here will conjure their own, but we are all simply attempting the necessary but finally impossible: to grasp again, for a fleeting hour, the enigmatic but compelling presence of a singular, now-departed friend, mentor, and colleague. In this we do not really seek consolation but celebration and expression of our gratitude for a long, massively productive, and ultimately positive life, blessed with genius and lived very much on Annemarie's own terms. We can only celebrate that life today with our collective and individual memories. So at this last formal parting from her in Cambridge, the place of her most ambivalent attraction and repulsion, among many who remember her well, let me close with two citations I think she might have wanted to give us herself, could she be here: first a prophetic Hadith that she loved to quote -- "People are asleep, and when they die, they awake"; and second, three lines from Goethe that I think she would give us, were she here, as hope for some kind of higher reunion whenever and wherever we are all "awakened":

"Von weiten winkt die Wiederkehr

Und sagt der Seele Freude zu.

Ist es so? Ja! Zweifle nicht!"

„Cronkhite Center“ - ein Graduierten-Dormitorium, in welcher Annemarie Schimmel zu Anfang ihrer Zeit in Harvard eine kleine Wohnung hatte; das Center hat auch Versammlungs- und Vorlesungsräume. – „Iruña“ – ein spanisches Restaurant nahe Harvard, wohin Annemarie Schimmel gern ihre Studenten ausführte; ihre Lieblingsgerichte dort waren „Basque Omelette“, gehörig geknoblacht, und Seezunge (englisch „sole“, von ihr meist als „Sole mutma’inna“ apostrophiert). – „Legal Seafood“ - das ursprüngliche Fischrestaurant dieses Namens war am Inman Square in Somerville; es hatte lange Bänke und Tische und Fische von hervorragender Frische; die Speisekarte stand auf einer Tafel, und man bezahlte unmittelbar nach der Bestellung. – „The Harvard Cow“ - Annemarie Schimmel konnten die großen blutigen („rare“) Steaks im Faculty Club nicht ausstehen und verfasste irgendwann ein Gedicht über die unerschöpfliche Harvard-Kuh.

Annemarie - Memorial Address

Wolfhart Heinrichs

The fact that I am standing here now I owe in no small measure to Annemarie, and I will forever be grateful to her. But I do not want to indulge in personal memories here. Rather I would like to remind those of you who knew her, and inform those of you who did not, of the prime driving force in her scholarly personality, and that is her search for beauty in Islamic culture: verbal beauty in poetry, spatial beauty in the arts, and especially calligraphy, and spiritual beauty in Sufism. Annemarie has been criticized for not paying attention to the darker sides of Islamic history and the present somewhat dismal situation of the Islamic world. But she was not only an ethereal person, she was also down to earth, even earthy at times, and she knew much about the nitty-gritty of Oriental politics from the familial, tribal, denominational points of view - things one rarely reads about in the Western media. She simply chose to direct her academic attention to what meant most to her: the manifestations of beauty in Islam.

I would like to focus on her close tie with poetry that had shaped her life from the beginning. She knew tons of German poems by heart; she learnt other languages through their poetry and for their poetry, following her revered model, the German Orientalist and late Romantic poet, Friedrich Rückert; she devoted a large part of her scholarly output to a most sensitive analysis of the intricate imagery in the poetry of at least six different Islamic languages; she produced elegant and tasteful translations (or transpositions) of this poetry into German or English verse; and--last but not least--she wrote her own poetry, in both German and English, suffused with images and ideas from the East.

I would like to honor her memory by reading two poems. The first is one of her own, in English, dealing with the emotional difficulties she had with the country of her employment and the way she tried to overcome them. It is entitled

This is no Country

This is no country where the stork repeats
his pious call Thine is the kingdom, Lord!
and not a garden where the nightingale
pours out his heart in longing for the Rose.
I never heard the dove ask: Where, oh where?
Nor did the plane-tree lift its hands in prayer;
The violets that grow along the street
are trampled down; they do not meditate.

But yesterday
at noon
over the dirty snow
over the blackish roofs
two seagulls sailed across the icy blue
whiter than snow, two lilies of the sky

And their crystal-like wings
reflected the sun
Light upon light...

The weary bird of my soul
joined, full of awe,
their silent hymn.

(From: *Nightingales Under the Snow*. Poems by Annemarie Schimmel. Foreword by Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh [London & New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications 1994], p. 33)

I need not point out the many Islamic resonances in these lines, as, e.g., the Koranic light upon light.

The second poem is a German one by the Romantic poet Clemens Brentano, one of the most poetic poets in the German language. When Annemarie wrote the German version of her book on the imagery of Persian poetry, she entitled it "Stern und Blume" ("Star and Flower"). The words are a quotation from Brentano's poem and also an allusion to the two lines to which they belong and which, one might say, contain a mini-poetics which, as Annemarie seems to insinuate, is applicable to Persian poetry as well. Brentano's poem as a whole is none too clear as to its contents, but this indeterminacy does not detract from its extreme musical and metaphoric beauty, quite the contrary. I believe that Annemarie made this allusive use of it, because it has a certain "Oriental" quality to it that makes it a bridge between the cultures and an excellent example for the Romantic idea that poetry, deep down, is the common language of mankind. Annemarie felt this quite deeply to be true.

An English prose translation of Brentano's poem would run as follows:

What is ripe in these lines, what smilingly beckons and thoughtfully implores, that will not hurt a child; simplicity has sown it, sorrow has blown across it, yearning has made it grow. And when the field is harvested, poverty goes through the stubble and looks for ears that are left; looks for love that will go down to the grave with her, looks for love that will rise again with her, looks for love that she can love. And when she in her loneliness and neglect has ground the grain all through the night, giving thanks in prayer, she will read, when the cock has

*crowed in the morning, what has preserved love and dispersed sorrow,
written on the crucifix in the field: O star and flower, spirit and
garment, love, sorrow, and time and eternity.*

(From: The Penguin Book of German Verse. Introduced and edited by
Leonard Forster [Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books 1980], p.
307)

And here is the original:

Was reif in diesen Zeilen steht,
Was lächelnd winkt und sinnend fleht,
Das soll kein Kind betrüben;
Die Einfalt hat es ausgesät,
Die Schwermut hat hindurch geweht,
Die Sehnsucht hats getrieben.
Und ist das Feld einst abgemäht,
Die Armut durch die Stoppeln geht,
Sucht Ähren, die geblieben;
Sucht Lieb', die für sie untergeht,
Sucht Lieb', die mit ihr aufersteht,
Sucht Lieb', die sie kann lieben.
Und hat sie einsam und verschmäht,
Die Nacht durch, dankend in Gebet,
Die Körner ausgerieben,
Liest sie, als früh der Hahn gekräht,
Was Lieb erhielt, was Leid verweht,
Ans Feldkreuz angeschrieben:
"O, Stern und Blume, Geist und Kleid,
Lieb', Leid und Zeit und Ewigkeit!"

Annemarie - Memorial Address*Ali Asani*

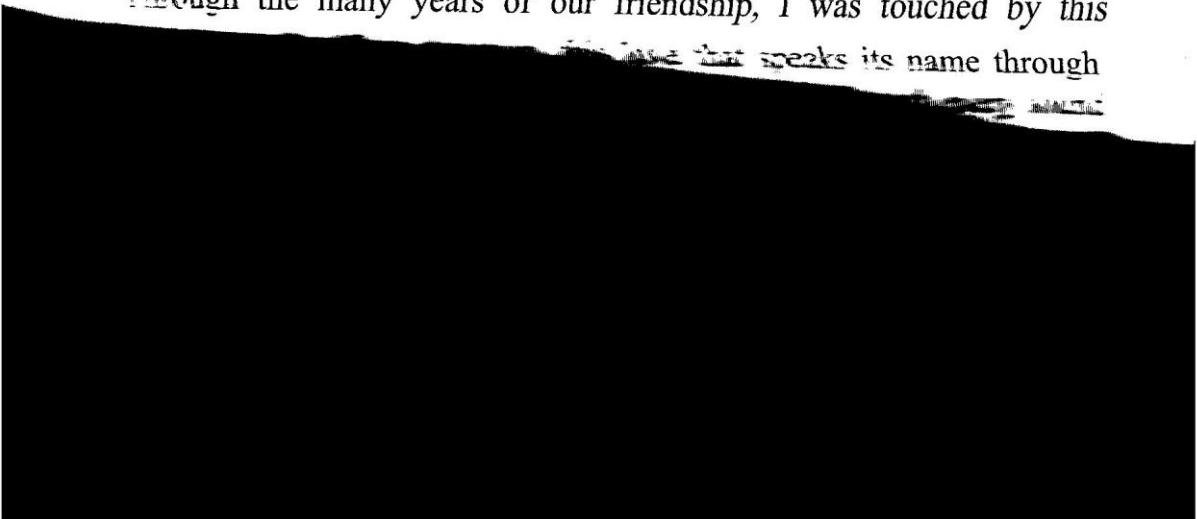
The world knew Annemarie Schimmel as an illustrious scholar of Islam, a scholar whose fame permeated not only the western academy but many different Muslim nations. She was a bridge of understanding between peoples and cultures, a ray of hope to many during times of trouble and conflict. So much has been said and written about her extraordinary life as a scholar, but for those who knew her intimately, she was so very different from her public persona. Annemarie Schimmel was, actually, a rather lonely person, a very private person, a one-woman show, as she sometimes characterized herself, typing her many books and articles without any help from a secretary or research assistant on her IBM electric typewriter. Deeply romantic, she was often lost in a world of her own – a beautiful, fragile world where she could cherish the closeness of her dearest friends, surrounded by her poetry, music and calligraphy. How very fortunate and blessed I consider myself to be that she was one of my dearest friends – and I was one of hers.

When I came to Harvard from Kenya in the mid-1970's to begin my studies, like many undergraduates, I felt this university to be a vast, overwhelming and impersonal place. Disoriented, I found in Prof. Schimmel a compassionate and sympathetic mentor, a person who immediately understood the awkwardness of adjusting to life in a foreign country, a scholar who befriended me and took me by the hand and never, as time showed, cut me adrift. To this day, I do not understand why she should would come to regard me then and forevermore as her “betajee” as she used to address me...I only know that I am where I am today, personally and professionally, because of her. Her loyalty to me is something that time and even death cannot

erase. Indeed, every signature of every letter she ever wrote to me was signed: Your Family.

There is little one can say that has not already been said regarding her illustrious academic career. Presidents, kings, queens, princes, ministers and Imams have all praised her work and the understanding she brought to the peoples and cultures of a divided world. She was an icon of learning, showered with honorary degrees, awards and medals from universities and governments around the world and after whom are named a street in Lahore and institutes of Islamic languages and literatures in Pakistan and Iran. Her apartment in Bonn was filled with awards from institutions and organizations from all over the world – yes, Prof. Annemarie Schimmel was one of the most beloved and prolific scholars of our time. Yet, when all is now said and done, I wonder how she would feel about the accolades and awards she received during her lifetime. What would be the one thing Annemarie would cherish above all else in her extraordinary life? I believe it would be the most precious of all human commodities – Love. At heart Annemarie Schimmel was a romantic, a true romantic not afraid to love. Her life was, like her poetry, graceful and filled with a yearning to love. It is this love that made her give so generously of herself and her immense knowledge, touching in unforgettable ways not just her students but people from every walk of life. It is this love that made her an extraordinary human being and teacher of such fine sensibilities. Through the many years of our friendship, I was touched by this

the love that speaks its name through



are asleep; when they die, they awaken.” Annemarie Schimmel believed in this Awakening, an Awakening which she says in her autobiography we cannot describe or represent. For you, dear Family, come home safely. With love from your Betajee.
